



## Frequently Asked Questions

---

### **Introduction:**

This document serves to provide answers to frequently asked questions on the use and functionality of the new performance appraisal system (PERforM) implemented for state employees in Fiscal Year 2008.

For most supervisors, the biggest change is that the process for documenting performance objectives and evaluating the employee's job performance will be automated. This automated process will hold supervisors and managers more accountable for conducting performance appraisals, and will allow each agency's management to report on the results of appraisals conducted for employees in their agency.

For the employee, the appraisal process will not change too much. Each employee required to have an appraisal will receive performance objectives for their position, and receive an annual performance appraisal rating for standard components. The final rating will be provided to the employee, with a copy to their personnel file, and will also be maintained in the PERforM system.

---

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### **1. What types of performance appraisals can be conducted in the new system?**

The PERforM system will accommodate the following three (3) types of performance appraisals:

##### **Annual**

Employees required to receive an appraisal will have one (1) annual rating per year between January 1 and March 31. Each agency will notify their employees of the specific timeframe in which the annual appraisal should be completed.

##### **Probation**

Probationary appraisals may be optional for some agencies and required by other agencies. They generally occur at the end of an employee's probationary period and serve to indicate whether the employee's probation should be ended or extended.

##### **Special**

Special appraisals are also optional but may be required by some agencies. Examples of special appraisals include, but are not limited to: interim performance appraisals scheduled as quarterly, semi-annually, etc.; as a means to improve specific areas of employee performance (i.e., improvement plan); changes in supervisor; or lateral transfers.

## 2. Who will receive an annual appraisal?

Any employee who...

- Has 12 months of state service by January 1 in the year in which the appraisal is being completed (based on SAM II Leave Progression Start Date); and
- Is in a benefits eligible position as designated by the agency.

Other employees may be directed by state policy, agency policy, or the Director of the Division of Personnel to receive an annual appraisal.

Employees who do not meet the criteria above may receive an annual appraisal at the discretion of the appointing authority, consistent with the policies of the agency.

## 3. When will annual performance appraisals be conducted for employees?

Annual performance appraisals will be completed between January 1 and March 31 of each year.

Any employee other than those listed above may be given annual appraisals at the discretion of the appointing authority, consistent with the policies of the specific agency.

## 4. What is a performance component?

A performance component is a major area of responsibility critical to the success of each employee's job. The PERforM process establishes five (5) "across-the-board" performance components for every state employee, regardless of job classification.

- Knowledge of Work
- Quality of Work
- Situational Responsiveness
- Initiative
- Dependability

In addition to the 5 components listed above, individuals designated as supervisors by their agency that have performance appraisal responsibility for one or more employees will also be evaluated on 3 additional components:

- Performance Planning and Documentation
- Leadership
- Management Skills

## 5. What is a performance objective—are they different from job components?

While performance components indicate the major areas to be appraised, performance objectives describe the level of performance the employee is expected to achieve for each component. Supervisors are responsible for developing specific and measurable performance objectives for each component on the employee's planning document. This can also be a collaborative process between supervisor and employee. Some performance objectives may be **routine** based on tasks or assignments that the employee is expected to do on a regular day-to-day basis; other performance objectives may change with each appraisal period (i.e., **special projects**), and some objectives may be **developmental** to help the employee increase his or her skill level.

**6. Can my performance objectives change?**

Yes, they can be modified to address such issues as changes in duties, a change in supervisor (rater), etc. At a minimum, each employee's performance objectives should be reviewed annually to ensure they remain appropriate.

Each time objectives are revised, they should be clearly communicated to the employee to ensure that he or she has a clear understanding of what is necessary to achieve or exceed a successful rating for each performance component. The Rater, Reviewer, and employee will document this communication by signing a new performance plan document.

**7. How is an overall performance appraisal rating determined for an employee—is the employee rated on a component, the objective or just the employee's overall performance?**

The employee's supervisor (rater) will score the employee on a 1 – 10 scale for each component. This score will reflect how well the employee performed with respect to all the stated objectives for the component—not each individual objective. Using the supervisor's scores, the PERforM system will automatically calculate and indicate the employee's overall performance rating on the employee's summary appraisal form. Each employee will receive one of the following performance ratings:

- Exceptional
- Outstanding
- Successful
- Needs Improvement

**8. How does the system calculate the totals to come up with the rating—will there be a rounding of numbers—and if so, couldn't that affect someone's overall performance rating?**

The PERforM system should accommodate rounding to one decimal without jumping anyone up, or moving anyone down to a different rating category.

**9. If an employee is promoted during the year, for which job will the employee's summary appraisal be based upon?**

Typically the employee will be evaluated for the position he or she occupied on December 31<sup>st</sup>. The rater may collaborate with the employee's former supervisor, or may refer to any special ratings that may have been conducted for the employee in the previous position. However, if the employee's current supervisor does not feel he or she can adequately assess the employee's performance, the supervisor (rater) may seek approval from the next level supervisor (reviewer) to exempt the employee from the summary appraisal process. Such exemptions must be done in accordance with all applicable state and agency policies.

\*Also refer to Question 12

**10. Will the performance appraisals supervisors' conduct be reviewed by anyone else?**

Yes. Once the rater finishes the performance appraisal, the rater will submit the appraisal to his or her immediate supervisor (reviewer) for approval. The reviewer can approve the appraisal or—if he or she disagrees with the appraisal rating or performance comments related to the rating—disapprove the appraisal and recommend changes to the rater (the reviewer cannot physically make changes to the appraisal). Once the appraisal is approved by the reviewer it will be presented to the employee. Once the employee, rater and reviewer have signed-off on the appraisal, it will be considered a completed appraisal and changes cannot be made.

**11. Who will conduct my performance appraisal rating if my supervisor is absent during the rating period?**

If this situation occurs, the next level supervisor (reviewer) will conduct performance ratings when your supervisor (rater) is absent.

If the reviewer is absent, the same chain of command will be in place. In effect, the reviewer's immediate supervisor will act as the second approval in the performance appraisal process.

**12. Is the new PERforM system capable of printing the employee's performance plan (containing components and performance objectives) and the employee's summary appraisal with the employee's rating and the supervisor's (rater's) comments about the employee's job performance?**

Yes. Supervisors (raters) will have the ability to print these documents for the employee.

**13. Will the employee need to sign the completed appraisal document?**

At the beginning of each appraisal period, supervisors (raters), employees and reviewers will be required to sign the employee's performance plan indicating that the performance plan was completed and discussed with the employee. Similarly, at the conclusion of each appraisal period, the supervisor (rater), reviewer and employee will again be required to sign the appraisal form indicating that the appraisal was completed, reviewed and discussed with the employee.

**14. Will an employee be able to respond to, or disagree with a performance appraisal rating he or she receives?**

Employees who believe the rating received for a component – or the overall rating received for the appraisal period – was not accurate may request to have their rating reviewed. This process should be conducted in a manner to resolve issues quickly and fairly. Information received from the employee will be reviewed by the individual designated by the employee's agency.

If the employee's rating should be changed, the appraisal rating will be overturned and the employee's supervisor (rater) will re-evaluate the component(s) of the appraisal document. An updated appraisal document will be generated, printed, signed and given to the employee.

If the rating remains unchanged, the supervisor will attach the employee's comments to the performance appraisal as a permanent record.

**15. If the employee's appraisal rating is changed, will that be used as part of the performance appraisal of the supervisor who conducted the rating?**

The fact that the employee's rating is changed does not necessarily indicate poor performance on the part of the supervisor (rater). Supervisors—and employees—will constantly learn more about the appraisal process over time. Certainly, however, if the supervisor's methods to accurately and fairly evaluate and measure employee performance need improvement, this issue should also be noted and addressed during the rater's own performance review process.

**16. Will there be limitations in PERforM that will prevent Raters from beginning work on annual appraisal before January 1?**

Yes. A rater cannot create an **annual appraisal** until the established rating period for that appraisal period begins (i.e., January 1 – March 31). As an example, if an appraisal period is from 1/1/2007 - 12/31/2007, a rater cannot create an appraisal for that period in PERforM until 1/1/2008. Appraisals cannot be created early. This time limitation does not apply to other types of appraisals. For all appraisal types, there is a limitation of one unfinished appraisal per employee per appointment per appraisal type.

## **RATER AND REVIEWER INFORMATION**

### **1. What type of training will be provided on the system? Will this training include how to actually conduct performance appraisal and communicate with employees?**

System users—primarily supervisors and managers—will receive information and training to help them navigate through the PERforM screens. Additionally, the online system itself will contain some “built-in” instructions to familiarize and remind users about how the system works. System administrators will also receive guidance on the new process. However, the online system is only a small part of the appraisal “big picture.” Consequently, training will also focus on the “human element” of the appraisal cycle—the one-on-one process of establishing performance objectives and discussing developmental opportunities, observing and providing feedback on performance throughout the year and finally evaluating and communicating performance ratings to employees to promote future success and ongoing professional development.

### **2. I do not have a personal computer. How will I be able to conduct appraisals on the employees I supervise?**

Supervisors (raters) who do not have access to a personal computer (and the online PERforM system) should immediately inform their next level supervisor (reviewer) and contact their agency personnel or human resources office to seek the appropriate assistance. The lack of computer access does not excuse the rater from his or her performance appraisal responsibilities. The rater, reviewer and agency personnel office will determine the most efficient method to enter and retrieve the required employee data.

### **3. What is a Delegate Rater?**

A Delegate Rater is an individual designated by an agency to perform data entry of annual performance appraisal ratings by job component when normal processes of developing objectives, rating performance, and/or approving appraisals cannot be completed in the PERforM system by the Rater and/or Reviewer.

### **4. As a Rater, can I choose to use a Delegate Rater rather than using PERforM myself?**

No. Delegate Raters are designated by an agency when a Rater or a Reviewer in the chain of review does not have the ability to perform normal processes in PERforM. Situations when this may occur are when supervisors (rater or reviewer) do not have PC access or when supervisors (rater or reviewer) work in a different agency than the employee they are required to rate.

In instances when a Delegate Rater is utilized by an agency, the Rater and Reviewer will not be excused from their performance appraisal responsibilities. Instead, a paper process will be used to develop performance plans and to conduct annual performance appraisals. These documents will serve as the official documentation of the appraisal process. The ratings contained on the Performance Appraisal will be entered into PERforM by the Delegate Rater for reporting purposes.

### **5. How will this system serve as a management tool?**

The PERforM system establishes a standardized and automated system of performance appraisal that will hold state employees as well as their managers and supervisors accountable for continually reaching for the highest levels of performance, regardless of their job functions. Where other performance evaluation processes did not make adequate distinctions in performance and the results were not monitored or enforced via consistent reporting data, the PERforM system will better enable state agencies to continually monitor and address performance related problems, plan and implement critical workforce development strategies and recognize exceptional performers to encourage commitment to state service and improve overall job satisfaction.

**6. Will the system include a list of the employees for whom supervisors (raters) must conduct appraisals?**

Supervisors (raters) will automatically see the name of each employee he or she must evaluate on their own secure PERforM "home page." If the name of an employee you supervise (and for whom you must conduct an appraisal) is not listed, supervisors (raters) should contact their personnel or human resources office.

**7. How will the list of employee names for whom supervisors (raters) must conduct appraisals be maintained as employees come and go?**

The reporting structure will be maintained in the SAM II HR Payroll System based on position numbers. The position number that a position reports to will be stored in the Position Control User Defined Window 3 (PUD3) screen, and used to identify raters and reviewers within the PERforM system. The PERforM design team will establish this information as the new system becomes operational. After that, each agency will be responsible for maintaining this information as changes occur.

**8. How many objectives are required for each component?**

At a minimum, the employee should be provided with one (1) objective per component. Typically, 3 – 7 objectives are needed to provide the employee with a clear understanding of what is necessary to achieve or exceed a successful rating for each performance component.

**9. Can I use the same set of objectives for all types of appraisals?**

No. Performance objectives are associated with the appraisal type (Annual, Special, or Probationary). Duplicate or similar objectives can be used for annual, special, and/or probationary planning documents; however, a separate (specific) set of objectives must be developed for each corresponding type of appraisal that will be completed for an employee. To assign an appraisal type to objectives, the rater will utilize the drop down box that is displayed on the screen used to develop objectives.

Example: The rater is supervising a new employee and is aware that a probationary appraisal and an annual appraisal will be conducted. In PERforM, the rater will develop a set of probationary objectives and a separate set of annual objectives. When the rater creates the Probationary Performance Appraisal, the probationary objectives will populate the appraisal document. At the time the Annual Performance Appraisal is created, the annual objectives will populate the appraisal document.

**10. How often can I modify an employee's performance objectives?**

Performance objectives can be modified anytime during the appraisal period; however, a new performance plan document must be printed and signed by the employee anytime changes are made to performance objectives.

Individual objectives can be edited until they are associated with an appraisal. Once objectives appear on an appraisal of any type, they can no longer be edited. Instead, the rater will be required to delete the obsolete objective and replace it by adding a new objective which contains the required revisions. New objectives will become effective after they have been reviewed with the employee on the Performance Plan, and will be applied to new appraisals that are created.

**11. Can objectives be copied from one employee to another employee?**

Yes. PERforM has a Copy Objectives feature that allows a Rater to copy all or only selected objectives from one employee to another employee under his/her supervision. This function is specific to appraisal type (annual, probationary, or special).

**12. Are there any limitations on the Copy Objectives feature?**

Yes, because the number of components for an individual employee can vary based on their supervisor responsibility. All employees are rated on five (5) standard components; however, employees designated as supervisors by their agency that have performance appraisal responsibility for one or more employees will also be evaluated on three (3) additional components.

Objectives can be copied from one employee to another employee with the same number of components, including copying objectives from one designated supervisory employee to another supervisory employee.

Objectives of an employee with 5 components can also be copied to a designated supervisory employee because the standard components are common between both categories of employees.

PERforM will not allow objectives of a designated supervisory employee with a total of 8 components to be copied to an employee with only 5 components. The number of components are disproportioned between the two categories of employees. Objectives under the supervisory components may not be relevant to the employee being rated only on the standard components.

**13. What happens to an employee's objectives if he/she changes employment and is no longer under my supervision?**

If the employee continues in state employment, the objectives developed for an employee will be transferred to his/her new supervisor (Rater). Often, this will require the new Rater to revise the existing objectives to reflect new expectations.

**14. Will there be a mechanism for maintaining documentation that may have been provided to an employee over the course of the year with the performance appraisal?**

Supervisors (raters) will have the ability to attach external documents regarding each employee's performance to each of his or her employee's appraisals via PERforM's attachment feature. For Annual Appraisals, this feature will only function as the appraisal is being created (i.e., from January 1 – March 31). For Probationary and Special Appraisals, the attachment can be used anytime throughout the year.

**15. Who is responsible for an employee's annual appraisal if employment changes occur during the annual rating period?**

If the rater and reviewer are aware that an employee will change employment during the rating period, it is recommended that the annual appraisal be completed prior to the employee's separation.

If an annual appraisal is not created by the time an employment change occurs, the new rater will be responsible for completing the annual appraisal. Where supervisors can collaborate within the agency, division, or work unit to rate the performance of an employee, the annual appraisal should occur. In other circumstances when insufficient information and/or resources exist to determine the rating of the employee on all components, the employee may be exempted from an annual appraisal consistent with the policies of the agency.

If an annual appraisal is created but incomplete at the time an employee separates, the rater who started the appraisal will be responsible for completing the appraisal process consistent with the policies of the agency.

If the rater or reviewer changes employment during the annual rating period, when at all possible, he/she should complete the annual appraisals for his/her employees before the date of separation. In this situation, the processing of incomplete appraisals will be the responsibility of the new rater.